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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



IN TENEBRIS: A POEM,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION,

OF THE

Delta Psi Fraternity,

AT

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, DECEMBER 6, 1859.

BY

CHAS. P. RUSSEL,
OF NEW YORK.

33

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CORRESPONDENCE.

SOUTH CAROLINA COLLEGE, Feb. 1, 1860.

BRO. CHAS. P. RUSSEL: The undersigned were appointed a Committee, at the last Convention, to request of you a copy of the admirable Poem delivered by you before the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the Delta Psi Fraternity, held in Columbia, South Carolina, Dec. 6th, 1859. It is with a great deal of pleasure that we discharge this duty, and hope that you will gratify the members of the Fraternity by acceding to their request.

Your brothers, in Delta Psi bonds,

FRANCIS S. PARKER, JR.,

J. PETIGRU MELLARD,

JOHN A. WILSON,

Committee.

NEW YORK, February 9, 1860.

BRETHREN: I have received your note, soliciting a copy of the Poem which I had the honor of delivering before the last Annual Convention of our Delta Psi Fraternity.

Feeling highly complimented by the brethren, as represented by your Committee, I take great pleasure in complying with their request.

Believe me, as ever,

Your brother in $\Delta \Psi$ bonds,

CHAS. P. RUSSEL.

FRANCIS S. PARKER, JR.,

J. PETIGRU MELLARD,

JOHN A. WILSON,

} *Committee.*



INTRODUCTION.

BRETHREN OF THE DELTA PSI! well-tried and beloved brothers!
Time a written page has closed, since last we met as now and parted—
But however brief the year, within the future there are others
Glorious with hope and promise to the true and noble-hearted!

Here our Mother's summons calls us—the fond sons of her selection—
Loyal unto her forever, and her generous communion :
Joined by power of lofty purpose, and the fire of sworn affection :
Firm as iron bands when welded in indissoluble union !

From the land whose rugged form in Winter's cold embrace reposes,
She hath bade her Northern children unto her maternal bosom,—
Here, where Winter's youngest breath is soothed with fragrance of
the roses,
And his age is all bedecked with many a tender orange-blossom !

We, of whom 'tis sometimes said (but falsely) that our frames are
moulded
Of a colder clay than that by Southern hot blood animated,
Come with open arms, and unto sympathetic breasts are folded,
Till from their hearts to our own one common channel is created.

Kindred thought, and the refined community of lofty feeling,
Which together holds mankind in one great fellowship immortal,
Is ours—but we claim a more exalted privilege, revealing
Love unselfish, standing like an Angel at the soul's bright portal!

Each, affiliated, swears affection unto every other ;
Swears in sickness to bear comfort—in calamity to cherish—

Ever to be tender, constant, and forgiving, to his brother,
And defend him 'gainst the Wrong, although self-sacrificed he perish!

Hallowed are our obligations, and our duty is unsordid :
And primordial and pure as God and Truth our springs of action—
For we know by Love itself Love's recompense is best awarded,
In its strong inherent faith, and in its unbought satisfaction.

Unto all about me here, long separated, and now meeting
For a moment—then to part, some but a year, or some forever,
Let me offer from a brother's inmost heart a cordial greeting ;
And bear with me awhile, as I unfold my poor endeavor.



IN TENEBRIS.

'Tis an evening in the time
When the year hath got its prime ;
When a thousand fruits have burst
With juices rich, in which immersed
Sons of pleasure drown their thirst.

'Tis an evening in the time
When the year hath got its prime ;
When the Rustic garners up
Laboriously each golden drop
Of wealth o'erspilling Plenty's cup.

'Tis an evening in the time
When the year hath got its prime ;
Scarce a leaf has fallen yet,
Nor has the hand of Autumn set
Its seal of yellow and of red
That glows upon the leaves ere dead.

'Tis an evening in the time
When the year hath got its prime :
When the tired day soon goes,
Hastening to its early close.

Now as the angry sun doth sink
From off the red horizon's brink,
Shooting aslant his parting beams
Through mist that from the rich soil streams,
His disc huge and distorted seems.
And as he puts aside his crown
And glittering raiments, and falls down
Upon his purple couch, Eve flings
Across him royal coverings:
And deftly draws about him close
His curtains tinted with the rose,
And leaves him wearied to repose.
And yet she doth return anon
Unto his bed to look upon
His radiant lineaments: and aside
Drawing the canopy, a tide
Of splendid lustre from his face
Doth pour upon her and embrace
Her form in glory: till her eyes
Droop their dark lashes to disguise
Their sudden wonder; and deep streaks
Of crimson fire her olive cheeks—
And quickly with her dusky hand
She closes in the radiance grand.

Then comes the Night—the Presence old
From whose breast the Earth and Heavens rolled ;
First Chaos called, within whose womb
Was vast infinity of gloom—
A void immense, where waves of sound
Their trembling way had not yet found.
Then Night and Silence were the same,
Without a form, without a name.
But at the Word of God was rent
This darkness ; and it quick gave vent
To atoms rolling into space,
Devoid of shape, nor fixed in place,
Till, flying each to each, the earth
And all creation then found birth.
But as the world in Night's dull breast
From the beginning had its rest,
God granted only half the day
Unto the Sun's resplendent ray.
The other was on Night bestowed,
Earth's mother, when she is allowed
To fold her child in transient sleep,
And o'er it tender watch to keep
With myriads of her gleaming eyes
Flashing upon us from the skies.

Now 'tis the hour succeeding eve,
When tired mortals first receive
An earnest of the day's reprieve
From toil. Art thou a denizen
Of some metropolis, where men
Bathe in the artificial light
Which flares upon the unquiet night?
Come where our souls may be alone
With night and nature, all our own.
Come with me to my cottage, where
Some freshness lurks amid the air,
That, blent with fragrance, comes and goes
O'er many a flower which round us grows.
There, raise the casement, and go out
Upon the balcony about
My house. Now let our enamoured sight
Drink in the beauty of the Night.
Just dark enough to see yon range
Of purple mountains, sad and strange
In their uncertainty of form;
Awhile ago the sunbeams warm
Of day departing threw a glow
Of heavenly lustre on their brow.
'Tis gone, and left no trace to shew

Its glorious pathway paved with gold !
But where it disappeared a fold
Of cloud is hanging grey and cold.

Soon as the Night invades the skies
The constellations all arise—
No moon to bid their lustre pale
Behind her thin translucent veil.
Lo ! in the heavens the Polar Star
Gleams from its frigid home afar :
Fixed o'er the Mystery unrevealed,
That fearless heroes' blood congealed,
And woman's burning tears have sealed.
Calmly that piercing Arctic Eye
Saw Franklin and his comrades die—
But when a Widow's thrilling cry
Resounded over all the world,
And Sympathy's pure sails, unfurled
By hands undaunted, were outspread
And consecrated to the Dead,
Then wept that Star, unmoved of years—
The pole was whitened with its tears !
And tenderly its smile then shone
Upon the white and silent zone—

What saw that lonely orb again?
What bands of stern and gallant men
From Briton's sea-encircled isle
Found consolation in its smile!
Plunged fearless through the snow-drifts bright—
Climbed o'er the ice-berg's dizzy height—
Suffered disease unknown before,
Yet agony unflinching bore;
And oftimes sinking by the way,
Died uncomplaining as they lay.
That star looked down on Ross and Moore,
On Saunders, Penny, and McClure—
On Forsyth, Austin, Richardson,
On Kennedy and Collinson
And Inglefield—a glorious band
As ever sailed from England's strand!
But from Columbia's foreign shore
The frozen waves what heroes bore?
How did that eye gaze bright and warm
Upon De Haven's noble form!
How did that starry eye shine down,
While Angels, at the Master's throne,
Were weaving Kane a martyr's crown!
O, mighty sacrifice of life

Upon the love-shrine of a wife !
Whose incense of affection steals
Up to God's heart, and thence reveals
Itself again to earth, refined
And all-refining, in the mind
Of men who cherish human kind.
O, noblest woman of thy race !
In whom no time could e'er efface
Thy dear one's memory ! Tho' thy face
Has gained deep furrows, and thy hair
Is silvered o'er with age and care,
Now is at last thy faithful breast
By no uncertainty oppressed—
Bow unto Heaven thy aged head,
And mourn the unreturning dead :
Nations shall reverence thee, and Fame
Bear the deep impress of thy name !

See the horizon of the North,
How glorious where the Bear gleams forth !
That fairy form to Childhood's eye,
The mighty Dipper of the sky.
Oft when a boy, entranced, amazed
At its magnificence, I gazed

For hours upon it, till my sight
Grew dim in its refulgent light.
Then ran Imagination wild :
And, in the fancy of a child,
I saw a hand gigantic clasp
That Dipper in its awful grasp !
I looked in terror as its cup
High in the heavens was lifted up—
Then in a sea of stars immersed
It fell ; and, with a burning thirst,
My frightened eyes beheld it drink
A million worlds within its brink !
Then 'twas upraised again to pour
Its contents with volcanic roar
Upon the universe—a stream
Of liquid fire and hissing steam !
I shuddered—woke—'twas but a dream !

Nigh unto Ursa Major, lo !
Where Bootes and Acturus glow—
The herdsman leads his dogs among
The stars' innumerable throng ;
And as the hounds behind him walk,
At the Great Bear they snarl and bark.

Next Hercules rears in the West
His dreadful arm and brawny breast—
Flies on his burning path, again
To slay the Lion in his den,
Or bear from the Hesperides
The precious bounties of their trees.
Look how celestial Lyra beams—
The Harp now silent—yet it seems
To flash the music which it poured
When Orpheus touched each quiv'ring cord.
Next Cygnus comes—the Swan which glides
Stately through Heaven's milky tides.
Far in the North King Cepheus stands ;
His foot upon the pole—his hand
A sceptre grasping ; he of that band
Was one, whom Argo bore from Greece
To Colchis and the golden fleece.
Near Cepheus, partner of his crown,
Cassiopeia has her throne ;
Below, Andromeda, her child,
Burns with a twinkling radiance mild ;
Beside her, her Preserver, stands
Perseus, who bears with gory hands
The Gorgon's head, upon whose brow

A thousand writhing serpents glow.
Now just uprising in the East
The ancient Aries lifts his breast,
On whom Chaldean shepherds gazed
With reverence as he nightly blazed.
Next, to the South, the Archer bends
His pliant bow, and oftentimes sends
Meteor arrows, sharp and bright,
Into the swart breast of the Night.

But see ! where earth and sky unite
There steals a soft and glim'ring light—
Like the first coming of the morn
Ere yet the blooming day is born.
First the Horizon round it creeps,
Then climbs up heaven's glittering steeps
Like midnight thief, whose stealthy tread
Falls noiseless round his victim's bed.
Then from the margin of the North
Faint luminous rays dart quickly forth,
Shooting their instantaneous beams
Half o'er the sky, as when red gleams
Gild some far distant thunder-cloud,
Whose muffled voice speaks half-aloud.

Up to the zenith and among
The frightened stars, its cloven tongue
Aurora Borealis darts !

Then draws it back, and then upstarts
More brilliant from its transient rest !
As some volcano's slumb'ring breast
Bursts, with its pent-up forces rife,
Magnificently into life !

Up to the zenith, and among
The trembling stars that cloven tongue
Doth lick the firmament, till Night
On startled pinions wings her flight
Before that grand and awful light !
Now in one universal glare
The sky is wrapped, and all the air
Reflects a lurid radiance down,
Till on th' astonished earth 'tis thrown ;
And men, with terror stricken dumb,
Believe the Day of Wrath is come !
Lo ! o'er our heads a rosy shade
Spreads gently—and the stars all fade
Insensibly, till they are seen
Just glimmering behind the screen.
Then comes, anon, a deeper flush

Of crimson, rendering the blush
Of rose intenser ; then a hue
Of glittering orange, or of blue,
Flashes upon th' astounded view !
Then all the shades prismatic gleam
In quick succession, till they stream
Into a halo, through whose rim
Some modest stars are twinkling dim !
'Tis as the Hand of God had thrown
A thousand rainbows into one !
And bidden this to earth reveal
His compact with its glorious seal !
Now fades the spectacle away,
And Night once more resumes her sway—
Again her golden orbs return,
And with a deeper lustre burn.

Dost notice yonder how the air
Is penetrated by a glare
As from a smouldering furnace ? There,
Thy home, the mighty city lies,
Scarce slumbering, with its many eyes
Of light yet watching, and its breast
Of adamant, where is no rest.

Through the whole night its myriad tongues
Of iron shout their clam'rous songs
From lofty spires—each note to tell
That Fate into th' unfathomed well
Of th' illimitable past
Another drop of time has cast.
But hist! methinks their voices grow
More frequent, hoarse, and sullen now—
And others, which were mute before,
Come booming like the distant roar
Of billows 'gainst a lofty shore.
And from each hoarsely quiv'ring mouth
In east and west, in north and south,
Out to the city's farthest verge,
Rolls o'er Night's sea the stormy surge
Of turbulent sound—and the dumb ear
Of slumber wakens—sudden fear
Disturbs sweet visions, while the clear
Loud warning of the watchman tells
The dreadful meaning of the bells.
Look where waves the glowing brand
In fierce Desolation's hand,
Gleaming in her iron clutch,
Fatal with its kindling touch!

Evil spirits she commands,
Stretch on high their fiery hands;
And betwixt their shining teeth,
Exultation as they breathe,
Roar the flames, and hiss, and seethe.
Where the loftiest forms of power
On such huge foundations tower,
That an earthquake well might prove
Impotent their strength to move,
Now those cruel conquerors rend
Stone from stone, and, savage, bend
Giant beams, and the huge wall
Hurl to earth with thund'ring fall.
Now their fiendish work is done—
And black crumbling ruins frown
Where an hour ago appeared
Palaces that years had reared,
While the air no more is flushed,
And the shouts of men are hushed;
And up from the fabrics crushed
The grim, noiseless smoke ascends,
Till its lofty column rends
Dark clouds into which it blends.

How much of misery is pent
In city walls! What backs are bent,
Brains racked, souls stifled, feelings crushed
By iron weights remorseless pushed
On feeble frames which chance has thrown
Irrevocably headlong down!
Pale child of Poverty! the night
Of circumstance is thine to fight
Forever, and the golden light
That streams upon the son of Wealth
Is thine to bask in but by stealth!
Poor girl, who from the high estate
Of virtue, inconsiderate,
Thy innocence to Love gave up,
And now must drain the bitter cup
Of Hate and Loathing, thee with might
Dark Falsehood and Dishonor smite,
And over thee the horrid night
Of Ruin flaps its ebon wing,
As through the crowd its wild cries ring:
"Room for the Lost, the Lost, Lost Thing!"
O, girl! the morning rays will rout
The shadows of the night without—
What sun shall pierce thy night of sin?

What dawn dispel the night within?
O, spotless woman! pure and chaste
As a white tablet undefaced!
Gaze not disdainfully upon
The poor degraded fallen one.
Blush at her errors, if thou must—
Her weak humanity—her trust
In man; her sacrifice of all
To passionate love—her final fall!
Thy cheeks reflect her deep disgrace
As a clear mirror would the face
Of guilt exhibit, and endure,
And yet be candid, bright, and pure!
But, blushing, pity—for the tip
Of thy white finger could her lip
But for a single moment press,
'Twere sacred as an angel's dress!
Pity her frailty—shed some light
Of sympathy upon her night
Of Odium, and Scorn, and Slight—
And it shall be reflected back
In rays of glory on thy track!
Pity her passion—wipe away
Her stains as only woman may,

Until her woman's soul shall shine
As clear and radiant as thine!

Turn from the monstrous city, full
Of sullen murmurs, with no lull,
And how unlike the sweet repose
Around us here, that deeper grows
As every lessening hour goes.
Awhile ago the cricket's trill
Shook the dull air with utterance shrill,
Or Katydids' contentious song
Broke from their dark retreats among.
Those plaintive heralds of the night
Have ceased their ditties to recite—
And, save the moody owl's fierce hoot,
Or barking of the restless brute,
Or night-hawk shrieking from on high,
Or wind's low whisper, or the sigh
Of leaves which quiver on the bush,
Nature in universal hush
Is now composed—no motion mars
Th' inactive lull—no discord jars
The dark tranquillity—no glare
Dissolves the murky tints of air;

While the dull hours, with stealthy feet,
Untold, their solemn round complete.
There is a quiet on yon town,
That hill-embosomed nestles down
In the embrace of swarthy Night.
There is a rest upon the bright
Majestic river, whose deep tide
Rolls into silence as beside
The rock its fretful waters glide.

Now the Angel with dreamy eyes,
Dusk Nepenthe, earthward flies
Slowly along the shrouded skies.
Thickly his ebon locks hang down :
Pressed to his brow is a lotus crown ;
And his form and noiseless wings are made
Of misty grey from twilight's shade.
Wearied mortals the advent hail,
Silent and calm, of the spirit pale ;
His presence is pure—his breath is sweet
To broken hearts that in agony beat.
But not alone to the race of men
Comes th' oblivious being then—
A charge more gentle he has to keep,

To touch the flowers with balmy sleep.
Hidden in air from mortal view,
The ground he sprinkles with drops of dew;
And the delicate essence of repose,
In the cups of violet and rose
And their sister plants, serenely flows.
And as unto its mother's breast
Turns the babe for its sweetest rest,
So droop their sensitive leaves to earth,
Whose generous bosom gave them birth.
Smiles the Spirit as falls his spell
On the fragrant blossoms he loves so well;
And he calls his zephyr child to sigh
Its music where they dreamless lie—
And he summons the golden stars to shine
With radiance hallowing and benign,
Where the sleeping flowers together twine—
And he floats above them with open wings,
To guard them in their slumberings.

Farewell! fond Night! my senses feel
Nepenthe's languor o'er them steal.
Come, Angel with the Lotus crown,
Beloved, come! I am thine own!

Above me hover—o'er my brow
Let Lethe's rapturous waters flow !
Scatter the incense of thy breath
Around, dear Brother of pale Death !
Give me to taste thy heavy cup
With dark elixir bubbling up—
And if thou wilt, transport me where
Unhallowed beings haunt the air
And faces hideous at me stare !
And all is horror—and I start
At grim illusions, till my heart
Quails with unutterable dread.
Or suffer me, beloved, to tread
Through scenes of beauty, where my feet
Shall wander free o'er meadows sweet
With every flower, and music such
As woke at Cynthius' soft touch,
Its inspiration round me pour
In long harmonious measures ; or
Where'er thou wilt—and I will sleep
Beneath thy wing—will laugh, or weep,
Or mutter loud, or silence keep,
As thou shalt bid me. O, divine
Spirit somniferous ! I am thine !





Jonathan P. Boyd

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